

INTERACTIONAL BEHAVIOR OF PRESCHOOL
CHILDREN WITH MOTHERS' PRESENT

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Socialization is the process of helping children to become functioning adult members of their society (Child, 1954). Through this process an individual becomes a member of a society by achieving ways of experiencing and behaving which conform with that society's values. The child learns the norms of his society---the common forms of behaving expected of him. Within the limits of what is considered customary and acceptable, the child is encouraged by his parents to perform certain activities; other activities are viewed neutrally, while still others are actively discouraged.

Three processes are involved in a child becoming socialized. These processes appear to be separate and distinct, but are so closely interrelated that failure in the development of one will result in a lower level of socialization than one might normally anticipate (Hurlock, 1964). The three processes involved in socialization are (1) proper performance behavior, (2) the playing of approved social roles, and (3) the development of social attitudes.

If the child is to learn to live socially with others and be comfortable in various environments, he must, first, have ample opportunities to learn to do so. This is especially

important during the years when socialization is a dominant phase of the child's development. Harris (1946) emphasized that "socialization does not proceed in a vacuum." Even before a child enters school, he benefits from social contacts with persons outside his immediate family and neighborhood. It is generally thought that children from rural areas do not have as many social contacts and new experiences outside the family and neighborhood as do children from urban areas.

The pervasive attitudes and behavior of parents are more likely to affect the child's development in socialization than are specific child-care practices (Parsons and Bales, 1955). Of all the influences on child development, human relations are most important. In any family there is a constantly changing constellation of relationships, which influences the development of each of the children in a different way. Many forces may affect the parent-child relationship. The parents' health and attitudes, inconsistencies, and possible immaturity or psychological disorders; tensions and quarrels between them; the birth of a younger brother or sister; the child's position in the family; the presence of a grandparent or other relative or boarder in the home; and many other factors enter into the dynamics of family relations (Strang, 1959).

The personality of the mother is of central importance in influencing a child's development (Sears, Maccoby, Levin, 1957). Her attitudes toward pregnancy, toward her husband and other members of the family, toward her career and social life,

toward her role as a mother, and most of all, her attitude toward the child and his need for understanding, affection, acceptance, approval and control, are vital.

The mother-child relationship is crucial to the young child because he is almost entirely dependent on his mother. During the first two years the child has a close relationship with his mother. From these first close ties to his mother he expands his relations to include his father and other persons in his immediate family, and then begins to reach out in contacts with children his own age and size. Even though the child continues to expand his contacts, he still relies heavily on his mother for guidance and understanding (Strang, 1959). Studies on maternal deprivation indicate clearly the importance of a mother figure during the preschool years (Levy, 1943).

It is apparent that the home may be regarded as the "seat of learning" for the development of social skills and of the desire to participate in activities and environments which are new and unfamiliar to the child. Only when children have satisfactory social relationships with members of their family can they enjoy social relationships with people outside the home, have healthy attitudes toward people, and learn to function successfully in unfamiliar activities and environments.

A review of the literature concerned with factors contributing to the socialization of a child indicated that many studies have been conducted using urban residents as subjects, yet thirty percent of the United States population as of 1960 was rural

(Bureau of the Census, 1960), and attention should be paid to the resources and techniques used by rural families in socialization. It is unlikely that their resources and techniques are exactly the same as those used in urban areas.

Mother-child relationships are two-way processes. It is just as important to understand the child's behavior as it is to understand the mother's as they influence one another (Strang, 1959). Most studies have concentrated on the mother's behavior with little emphasis on the child's. The purpose of this investigation was to study the interactional behavior of the preschool child and his mother, with emphasis on the child's behavior as a means of gaining insight into the socialization process.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Interaction behavior is an important indicator of the underlying relationship among individuals (Dalton, 1961). On the basis of overt behavior, inferences and interpretations can be made and from these can be derived an understanding of the meaning of the behavior and its significance for the individuals involved.

Social interaction refers to the process by which persons acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that make them more or less able members of their society. Freeman and Schowel (1953) described the family as the most influential agent in the socialization process. The family provides primacy in the experiences of the individual, which makes a deep impression on him. During infancy and early childhood years, the individual is more sensitive to stimuli than during later years. Given parents act toward a given child in certain ways that tend to be consistent from situation to situation and tend to differentiate this parent from other parents (Landreth, 1958). These consistently repeated situations are learning situations for the child in which he builds up social habit systems that in time constitute his personality.

Within the family setting, the mother appears to be the most significant person to the child (Watson, 1965). She feeds, cares for, and is with the child a majority of the time.

Many factors contribute to the socialization of a child. Social experiences gained from within the family and from outside sources all contribute to the socialization process. No child is born social or antisocial. He is not even gregarious at first, though the drive to be with people develops early in the first year of life (Landreth, 1958). What the child's attitude toward people and social experiences will be and how he will get along with other people will depend largely upon learning experiences during the early, formative years of his life. Most of the preschool child's attitudes are formulated within the immediate family setting. Relationships within the family may be divided into: mother-child relationships, sibling relationships, and childrearing practices. The home environment fosters certain types of behavior by a child. The behaviors dealt with in this review of literature include: aggressive behavior, dependency behavior, and coping behavior.

FACTORS WITHIN THE HOME

Mother-Child Relationships

Mother-child relationships are very important in the socialization process. The child's relationship with his parents is a significant factor in the development of his personality. During his earliest years the parents constitute the chief

social influence. The techniques which the parents employ in their treatment of the child, the incentives they offer, the frustrations they impose, their methods of control, together with the character of their general attitudes toward him, serve as formative forces on the child's behavior. Later, the determining nature of their interaction with the child is supplemented by forces from other aspects of the environment. Nevertheless, all through the dependent years, the particular quality of the parents' roles in parent-child relationships is of paramount importance in the establishment of permanent motivational and personality attributes. Both parents are important in the socialization process but the mother serves as the major agent through which the infant and younger child learns. Even in infancy, the father is a secondary source of learning, as are other individuals in the immediate family, such as siblings (Watson, 1965).

Merrill (1946) in measuring mother-child interaction motivated the mother to encourage her child to do well in a particular situation. Because of the increased strength of motivation the mother's behavior was characterized by an increased domination of the child as expressed in arbitrary direction of, and interference with, the child's activity. The directing took the form either of concrete determination of the child's actions in ways which the mother considered would exemplify his possibilities, or of a general attitude of imposing her control. The interference aspect of the relationship apparently

stemmed from the mother's increased awareness of and involvement in the behavior of the child.

Antonovsky (1959) came to the following conclusions in the area of mother-child relationships:

1. The frequency of occurrence of dependent behavior (help-seeking, noninteractive play) on the part of the child is negatively related to the degree of affectional contacts expressed by the mother toward the child and positively related to the degree of demands, restrictiveness, and punishment expressed by the mother toward the child.
2. The frequency of disobedience on the part of the child as measured in terms of the relative noncompliance to compliance to mother's suggestions, interference with, and prevention of activity on the part of the child is positively related to the restrictiveness and negatively related to demands and punishment.
3. The frequency of occurrence of initiative responses on the part of the child is positively related to the degree of affectional contact and demands expressed by the mother toward the child and negatively related to the degree to which the mother restricts the child.

In a study reported by Finney (1961) concerning maternal influences on children's personality and character, male children were scored on pessimism, dependency, anxiety, conscience, repression, overt aggression and covert hostility. Maternal nurturance was found to lessen the child's pessimism, dependency, anxiety, and passive hostility, and to expedite the child's development of conscience. Maternal hostility and rigidity tended to make the child pessimistic and resentful. The child's use of repression was found to be positively related to the mother's use of the same defense.

The purpose of a study conducted by Behrens (1954) was to test the hypothesis that the rearing of a young child, viewed as socialization is primarily an expression of the mother's

character structure as it is integrated into the maternal role and as the mother interacts with the child in that role.

Results indicated that the child's adjustment to socialization was significantly related to the "total mother person" and specifically to her character structure, but insignificantly related to the mother's specific rearing techniques, where the mother's conduct showed wide variation and inconsistency. This was traced to her own emotional needs and conflicts. In the mother's social interaction with the child as she took on the maternal role, she both consciously and unconsciously expressed her emotional needs and attempted to satisfy them. Her integration into the maternal role depended upon her perception of self and role and influenced the child's perception of her. It is also evident that the child was both sensitive and responsive to the unconscious attitudes of the mother as well as to her overt conduct. The quality of his adjustment is more dependent on his total interaction with his mother than on any specific aspects of social discipline.

The interrelation between the preschool child's behavior and certain factors in the home was studied by Hattwick (1936). Irresponsibility on the part of the mother was related to emotional tensions, irresponsibility, and insecurity on the part of the child. Irresponsible mothers are liable to be inconsistent. The child of the irresponsible mother tended to ignore requests and to be hard to reason with. Inconsistency on the part of the parent was seen as related to such behavior.

Sibling Relationships

Very early in life, the child becomes aware of his status in the family and of the role he is expected to play. Most children regard their roles as inferior to those of their siblings and wish they were born sooner or later in the family constellation so that their roles would be different (Strang, 1959).

As Gardner (1964) suggested, the child's position in a sequence of brothers and sisters greatly affects the course of his later life. Factors such as ordinal position, age differences, and sex of siblings, contribute to the significance of the child's life within a family (Hurlock, 1964).

Koch (1955) developed an extensive study concerning the relation of certain family constellation characteristics and the attitudes of children toward adults. Independent variables including sex of the child, sex of siblings, ordinal position and age difference between siblings up to six years were considered. The major findings were:

1. Girls were rated more affectionate, more obedient and less resistant than were boys.
2. Girls with a younger brother were judged more friendly to adults and more responsive to adult approval than were boys with a younger brother or girls with a younger sister.
3. Girls with a sibling within two years older or younger were rated more friendly to adults than were boys.
4. Those of opposite-sex sibling pairs at the two closest spacings were judged more friendly to adults than were those of the same-sex pairs, though the differences were statistically significant only at the two to four year spacing.

5. Second-born males with a male sib near in age were low in friendliness to adults but increased in friendliness and in the extent to which they bid for adult attention, as the difference in age.

Koch (1955) also conducted a study concerned with personality correlates of sex, sibling position and sex of sibling among five-and six-year-old children. Children with brothers were rated as more cooperative, ambitious, enthusiastic, and less wavering in decisions than were children with sisters. The children from opposite-sex sibling pairs, as compared with those whose sibling was of the same sex, were judged to be more self-confident, inclined to recover more speedily from emotional upset, cheerful, kind, "healthy," curious, tenacious, friendly to adults and children, and less wavering in decisions. The children with an older brother and those with a younger sister received higher ratings in popularity, self-confidence, and tendency to seek attention from adults than did children with an older sister or with a younger brother.

Lasko (1954) found that parent behavior toward first children when contrasted to second was less warm emotionally and more restrictive and coercive. These differences were apparent during preschool years than later.

Childrearing Practices

A review of the literature reveals two basic methods of discipline used in childrearing. The first is authoritarian discipline which is characterized by strict rules and regulations to enforce desired behavior (Hurlock, 1964). The second is the

democratic method of discipline which employs explanation, discussion, and reasoning to help the child understand why he is expected to behave in a certain way.

Baldwin (1948) concluded from his study concerning socialization and parent-child relationships that a democratic home environment tended to produce an aggressive, fearless, planful child, likely to be a leader in the nursery school situation, but one who is also more cruel than the average child of his age. On the other hand, an authoritarian home environment tended to decrease quarrelsomeness, negativism and disobedience but at the same time decreases aggressiveness, planfulness, tenacity, and fearlessness.

Serot and Teevan (1961) hypothesized that: (1) a child's adjustment is related to his perception of his relationship with his family; (2) the child's perception of the relationship is unrelated to his parents' perception of the same; and (3) the parents' perception of the relationship is unrelated to his offspring's adjustment.

According to Foote (1956) socialization within the home should include such functions as exploration, creativity, and play on the part of the individual in becoming an autonomous adult. The predominant effect of parent behavior upon the socialization of the preschool child is to raise or lower his willingness and ability to behave actively toward his environment. Freedom and permissiveness in the home by not punishing his active explorations and his aggressive reactions

to frustrations, permit the child to become active, outgoing, and spontaneous. Freedom alone does not, however, actively encourage the development of spontaneity. A high level of interaction between the parent and child is required to push the child into activity, particularly of the interpersonal variety.

TYPES OF BEHAVIOR

Dependency Behavior

Whether the child, as he grows older and acquires skills that normally lead to independence, will actually become independent will be greatly influenced by child-training methods and learning opportunities afforded by the home. Children who are encouraged to be dependent---who have too much done for them and who have too few responsibilities themselves---learn to be dependent. Dependency training is more characteristic of middle-class parents (Hurlock, 1964). Because young children derive more satisfaction from their dependency on adults than on agemates, most of their attention-seeking behaviors are directed toward adults.

Crandall, Preston, and Rabson (1960) conducted a study on maternal reactions and the development of independence and achievement behavior in young children. They found high achieving children less dependent on adults than children who displayed fewer achievement efforts. Independence from adults and amount of achievement striving were positively correlated in the

children's nursery school free-play behaviors. Mothers who frequently rewarded achievement efforts were less nurturant toward their children, were less acceptant and rewarding of help-seeking and emotional support-seeking overtures.

Stith and Conner (1962) investigated dependency and helpfulness in young children. They concluded that as age increased dependent contacts with adults decreased in both frequency and proportion. Helpful contacts with both adults and children increased significantly.

McCandless, Bilous, and Bennett (1961) concluded from their study on peer popularity and dependence on adults in preschool age socialization that popularity and emotional dependency are negatively related to "total adult contacts." This over-all index of adult dependency interfered more with the girls' than with boys' popularity. Other findings indicated that mothers did not intervene as frequently in daughters' as in sons' conflicts, although girls more frequently than boys asked teachers to solve their problems. Girls showed more total emotional dependency than boys, although the difference became nonsignificant when "asks teacher intervention" was eliminated from the category of emotional dependence.

Girls tended to seek satisfaction from dependency on adults rather than from participation from their peers more frequently than boys. Even at this early age boys seem to avoid a dependency relation with teachers and compensate for their lack of popularity with their peers in other ways

(Strang, 1959). Extreme dependency at the preschool age may be due to several causes---to unsatisfied needs for affection, to frustration in infancy, to overprotective parents, to lack of techniques for relation to other children.

Stendler (1954) questioned whether certain of the infant disciplines such as early weaning, difficult weaning or toilet training would result in overdependency. She concluded that it is how the mother handles the increased dependency demands that determines whether or not the child will be overdependent. For example, by rewarding some behaviors with her approval and praise she can reinforce the drive for independence. As doing things for himself becomes more and more pleasurable to the child, his dependency demands will decrease.

Aggressive Behavior

Aggression as defined by Hurlock (1964) is an actual or threatened act of hostility, usually provoked by another person. Ordinarily, it reaches its peak between the ages of $4\frac{1}{2}$ and $5\frac{1}{2}$ years (Marshall, 1961). Children tend to be more aggressive when there is an adult around whose attention they want to attract or whose protection they can seek should their aggressiveness lead to a quarrel.

The social play of pairs of young boys and the aggression of one member of each pair were scored in a study conducted by Siegel and Kohn (1959). One-half of the pairs' play sessions were in the presence of a permissive adult, and one-half were in the absence of any adult. Two-thirds of the subjects in

the adult-present sessions were more aggressive in the second than in the first session, and all subjects in the adult-absent sessions were less aggressive than in the first session.

Levin and Turgeon (1957) investigated the influence of the mother's presence on children's doll play aggression. Results indicated that mothers tend generally to be intolerant of aggression directed toward themselves, somewhat more tolerant of fighting and quarreling among siblings, and still more accepting of their children's fighting with playmates. There was some evidence that, at the preschool age, girls have more strongly developed superegos than do boys, so that it might be expected that girls are more influenced by the mother's presence than are boys.

Walters, Pearce and Dahms (1957) investigated the area of affectional and aggressive behavior in preschool children. At all age levels affectional responses outnumbered aggressive responses, and at the four-and-five-year levels there was a tendency for the children to express their aggression verbally rather than physically. Aggression tended to increase with age from two years through four years of age, with boys being more aggressive than girls.

Coping Behavior

Coping patterns are developed when a child is confronted with a new situation which cannot be handled by reflex, habitual, or other routine or automatic action. Campbell and Cox (1968) assessed young children in new situations with and without

their mothers. They found that adaption to the novel situation was facilitated by presence of mothers or substitutes and impeded by their absence. Absence of the mother produced a decrease in talking, movement, and playing with toys.

Landreth (1958) supported the idea that a mother's presence helped her child to respond adaptively to a strange situation. Reactions were compared of young children when alone or accompanied by their mother in a strange room which was attractively decorated and had many toys and pictures. Those with their mothers displayed three times as much adaptive behavior and one-third as much emotional behavior as those alone. Further, when those who first entered the room with their mothers were later taken there alone, their adaptive behavior decreased. Those who were taken alone became only slightly more adaptive when they were accompanied, by their mothers, in later sessions.

Mendel (1965) suggests that there is an optimum period for exploratory activity in the organisms ontogeny. While this optimum time is species-specific, it generally occurs sometime during early childhood. In his study concerning children's preference for different degrees of novelty he found that boys prefer higher degrees of novelty, while girls chose lower and higher degrees of novelty with equal frequency. Children between $3\frac{1}{2}$ and $4\frac{1}{2}$ years did not respond differently to increasing magnitudes of novelty, while those between $4\frac{1}{2}$ and $5\frac{1}{2}$ were more sensitive to difference in degree of novelty and preferred greater novelty to less novelty.

In summary, the review of literature suggests that the social behavior of the child is related to the child's relationship with his parents, in particular his mother's responses to him, his sex, sibling position, sex of siblings and the presence of other adults. Most of the studies cited have involved children from urban areas whose opportunities for social contact were maximized by nursery school attendance. The purpose of this exploratory study was to observe and record the social behavior of children from a rural area in an attempt to further understanding of the behaviors characteristic of these children in an unfamiliar environment.

CHAPTER III

DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECTS

The sample consisted of 14 children (5 boys and 9 girls) and their mothers who were rural residents of a small community in Kansas. Eleven (79 percent) of the children were residents of farms while three (21 percent) were residents of a small town with a population of approximately 575. The children ranged in age from 52 months to 65 months. Six of the 14 subjects (46 percent) were 60 or 61 months of age. All the children were of the Caucasian race.

The number of siblings and ordinal position of each child was recorded. Of the 14 children, only one had more than four brothers and/or sisters. Five (36 percent) of the children were first-born children in the family. Five (36 percent) of the children were youngest children of the family. Six (43 percent) of the children had one or more older sisters while seven (50 percent) had one or more older brothers. Six (43 percent) of the children had younger sisters while only two (14 percent) had younger brothers. There were no "only" children.

The mothers ranged in age from 21 years to 40 years. The mean age was 30 years, 6 months. Only one mother was employed outside the home. All except one mother had completed a high

school education. Seventy-eight percent of the mothers had not attained more than a 12th grade education. One mother was a college graduate and was presently working toward a Masters degree.

Seven (50 percent) of the fathers were farmers. One of these was also completing work on a Ph.D. degree at a nearby university. Two (14 percent) of the fathers were teaching, one at the high school level and one at the college level. The highest educational level attained by 50 percent of the fathers was 12th grade. Two fathers had completed work for a Masters degree and one had completed a Ph.D. degree.

Table 1. Description of subjects.

Characteristic	Number of subjects	Percentage of total number of subjects
Age of Child		
52 months	1	7
53 months	2	14
54 months	1	7
56 months	1	7
57 months	1	7
60 months	2	14
61 months	4	29
62 months	1	7
65 months	1	7
Number of Siblings		
1	5	36
2	3	21
3	4	29
4	1	7
9	1	7
Ordinal Position		
1st child	5	36
2nd child	2	14
3rd child	4	29
4th child	1	7
5th child	1	7
10th child	1	7
Age of mother		
21 years	1	7
25 years	1	7
26 years	1	7
27 years	2	14
30 years	2	14
31 years	2	14
32 years	1	7
34 years	1	7
36 years	1	7
39 years	1	7
40 years	1	7
Educational Level of Mother		
11th grade	1	7
12th grade	10	71
15th grade	2	14
16th grade	1	7

Table 1. (continued)

Characteristic	Number of subjects	Percentage of total number of subjects
Occupation of Mother		
Professional	1	7
Homemaker	13	93
Educational Level of Father		
12th grade	7	50
13th grade	1	7
14th grade	1	7
15th grade	2	14
Masters	2	14
Ph.D.	1	7
Occupation of Father		
Professional	2	14
Clerical	1	7
Sales	1	7
Managers, Officials	1	7
Skilled	2	14
Farmer	7	50

CHAPTER IV

PROCEDURE

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the investigation was to study the interactional behavior of preschool children and their mothers when the children were placed in an unfamiliar environment. The focus of this study was on the child's behavior. It was hoped that information furthering the understanding of the socialization process would be gained.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were examined:

The interactional behavior of preschool children with their mothers in an unfamiliar environment is not affected by the following factors:

- A. Age of mother
- B. Age of child
- C. Sex of child
- D. Educational level of mother
- E. Educational level of father
- F. Occupational status of the child's father

Sample

The sample consisted of 14 children and their mothers who were rural residents of a small community in Kansas. Five boys and nine girls ranging in age from 52 months to 65 months were included in the sample. The names of the subjects, preschool children and their mothers, were acquired through the assistant superintendent of the schools in the nearest town.

Method

A letter (Appendix) briefly describing the proposed study was sent to each mother of a child eligible for the study. This letter was followed by a personal visit to each home by the investigator or her co-worker to further explain the research, to gain the mother's consent and to arrange a time for the observation. If consent was granted, questions were asked about the child, siblings and parents (Appendix).

Data were obtained by direct observation of the mother and child pairs in a specially arranged room on the university campus. This room was equipped with various items (listed below) usually found in a nursery school setting. A one-way mirror allowed the investigator to observe the children from an adjoining room. The same procedure was followed for all mother and child pairs. When the mother and child arrived they were welcomed by an aide who asked them to leave their coats in the hall. The mother was told prior to entering the observation room, "We would like to observe you and your child play, just

as if you were at home. Please come in and make yourself comfortable. Someone will come and get you at the end of the observation period."

The observation room contained (1) four small tables; (2) four small chairs; (3) cupboard and dishes; (4) tub, wash cloth, towel, two boats, egg beater, bar of soap; (5) two toy telephones; (6) four puzzles; (7) play dough; (8) scissors, paper, crayons; (9) truck and car; (10) blocks; (11) easel and paints; (12) children's books; (13) doll, clothes; (14) three adult chairs; and (15) four magazines for the mother. A photograph of the room is included in the Appendix. These particular items were chosen because they suited the interests and abilities of four-and-five-year-old children. Items for the mother were also included.

The mother-child interaction was observed by the investigator for a half-hour period. Eighteen behavioral categories were identified prior to the observations. A recording sheet (Appendix) was prepared which included the behavioral categories and was divided into thirty columns, one for each minute. The investigator recorded each separate act that occurred by marking within the appropriate column. Timing was provided by a tape recording designating each one minute interval within the half-hour period.

After the thirty minute observation period, the mother was interviewed by the investigator. The interview schedule (Appendix) was designed to give the investigator information

concerning the child's behavior in other situations. Each interview was recorded on tape. During this time the child was served a snack by a co-worker and allowed to continue playing in the observation room.

Behavior Categories

The categories chosen as most useful for characterizing the child's behavior were selected partly on theoretical and partly on empirical grounds. From a theoretical standpoint it was desirable to have categories which would reflect accurately the different amounts and kinds of behavior occurring. From an empirical standpoint it was necessary to select categories that were clearly definable, easily recognized in the rapid flux of social interaction, and comprehensive enough to permit the categorization of all possible behavior incidents that appeared during the observation period.

The categories listed below were believed to fulfill these conditions. A running description of behavior couched in these terms permits quantitative evaluation of certain characteristics of the child's behavior. The categories used were:

- (1) seeks physical contact, (2) seeks reassurance,
- (3) seeks protection, (4) seeks comfort, (5) seeks permission,
- (6) seeks affection, (7) seeks attention, (8) seeks praise and approval, (9) seeks help, (10) seeks instruction, (11) seeks reward, (12) seeks information, (13) gives information, (14) gives directions to mother, (15) explains own behavior to mother, (16) shows object to mother, (17) statement of fact, and (18) uncooperative behavior.

Eye contact between mother and child was included in the category "seeks attention." Eye contact included the child's glances and stares at the adult, which neither involved verbal accompaniment, required responses from the mother, nor initiated a sequence of interaction when it was apparent to the child that his glances had been noticed by the mother.

Observer Reliability

Before the observations for the study were made, the reliability of observation and recording was measured by calculation of the percentage agreement between two observers, the investigator and a trained observer. The two observers rated independently the behavior of each child until a percentage agreement of .80 was achieved. This agreement was reached by studying similar mother-child pairs who were not part of this study. The subjects used in this study were all observed by the investigator.

Analysis of Data

The data collected during the observation periods were analyzed statistically using the Mann-Whitney U test. The sample was divided into subgroups based on the variables under consideration. The magnitude of the difference between the subgroups on the frequency of behavior in each category was tested for significance utilizing the Mann-Whitney U test. Mean scores and ranges were obtained for the descriptive part

of the study. Data were plotted on line graphs to show comparisons between the behavioral categories and factors such as age and sex of child, age of mother, occupation of father and education level of the mother and father.

The information obtained from the interviews conducted with the mothers was coded and responses were categorized according to content. This information was used to describe the child's behavior at home and in other situations.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

Behavior Categories

Number of Responses

Behavior was observed for the sample in thirteen of the eighteen predetermined categories. The total number of responses recorded in all the categories for the fourteen subjects was 1.575 (Table 2). The categories in which no behavior was recorded were: seeking physical contact, seeking protection, seeking comfort, seeking instruction, and seeking reward.

Table 2. Total number of behaviors occurring in each category.

Category	Total responses	Percentage of total
Statement of Fact	685	43.5
Gives Information	286	18.1
Seeks Information	267	16.9
Explains Own Behavior to Mother	116	7.4
Seeks Attention	106	6.7
Gives Directions to Mother	31	2.0
Seeks Affection	30	1.9
Shows Objects to Mother	26	1.7
Seeks Help	17	1.1
Uncooperative Behavior	4	0.3
Seeks Permission	3	0.2
Seeks Reassurance	3	0.2
Seeks Praise and Approval	1	0.1
Total	1.575	

Frequency of Behavior

The most frequent behavior was exhibited in the statement of fact category; e.g. "This car is blue." The behavior in this category constituted 685 responses or 43.5 percent of the total number of responses. Every child made at least seventeen such responses.

The total number of responses for each child during the half hour observation period ranged from 39 to 183. The mean was 112.4 responses. The mean for each behavior is shown in Table 3. Each of the subjects displayed behavior in the following categories; seeking information, giving information and statement of fact.

Table 3. Range and mean frequency for each behavior category.

Category	No. of subjects manifesting behavior	Range	Mean frequency for 30-minute period
Statement of Fact	14	17-71	48.9
Gives Information	14	6-52	20.4
Seeks Information	14	4-58	19.1
Seeks Attention	13	1-19	13.0
Seeks Affection	3	4-18	10.0
Explains Own Behavior to Mother	12	2-26	9.7
Gives Directions to Mother	11	1-7	2.8
Seeks Help	7	1-5	2.5
Shows Object to Mother	11	1-6	2.4
Uncooperative Behavior	2	2	2.0
Seeks Permission	2	1-2	1.5
Seeks Praise and Approval	1	1	1.0
Seeks Reassurance	1	1	1.0

Age of Child

The behavior of older children in the sample (61 months to 65 months) was compared to the behavior of the younger children (52 months to 60 months). The younger children sought affection more often from their mothers than did the older children (Figure 1). The younger children also sought information more frequently from their mothers. However, the older children gave information more often to their mothers than did the younger children. The frequency of the behavior in each of the categories was not found to be significantly related to the age of the child.

Sex of the Child

Girls showed a trend toward seeking affection and information more often than did the boys (Figure 2). The boys in the sample gave more information to their mothers. The frequency of explaining own behavior to mother and seeking attention were related to the sex of the child at the .10 level of significance according to the Mann-Whitney U test with girls exhibiting behavior more frequently in these two categories.

Age of Mother

The mothers of the children were divided into a younger group (21-30 years) and an older group (31-40 years). A comparison of the mean behavior of children with younger mothers to that of children with older mothers is shown in figure 3. The findings indicated that children with younger mothers sought

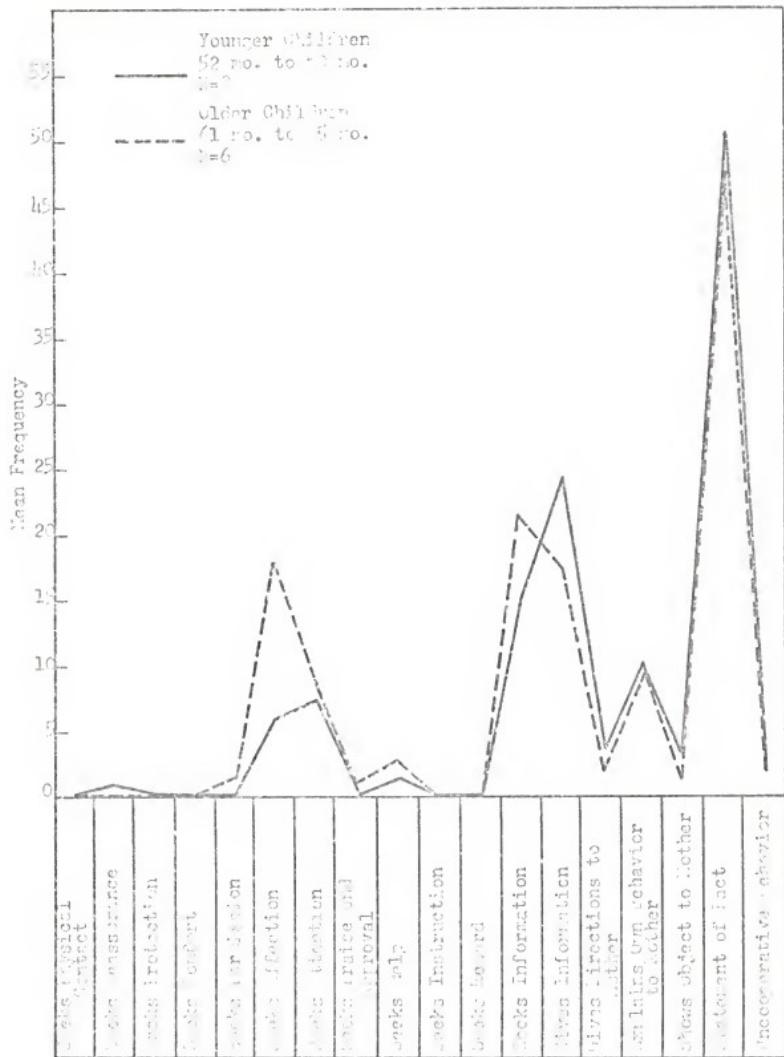


Fig. 1. Mean frequency of behaviors according to age of child.

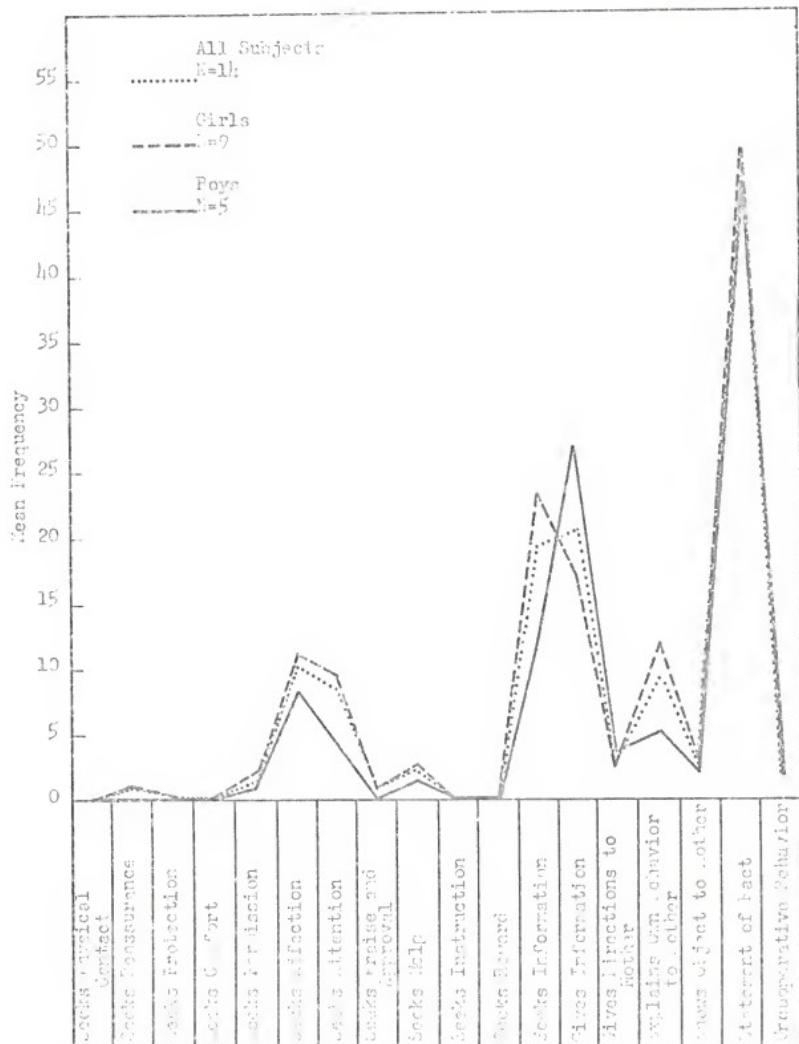


Fig. 2. Mean frequency of behaviors according to sex of child.

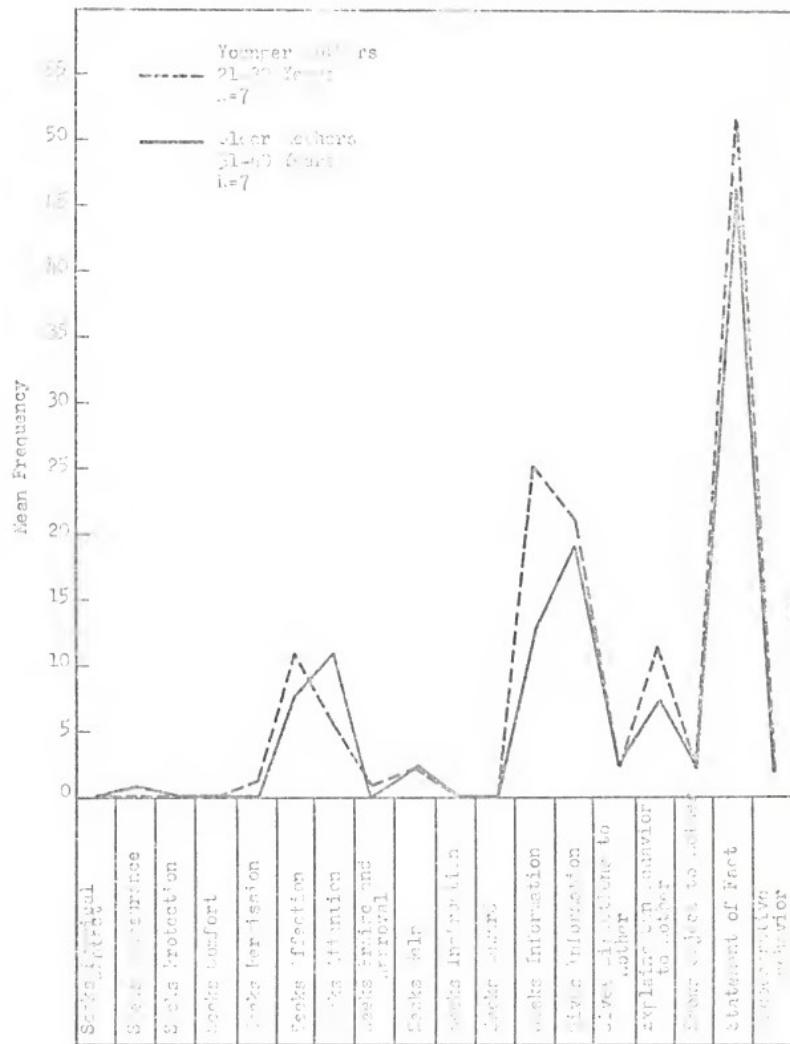


Fig. 3. Mean frequency of behaviors according to age of mother.

information more frequently than did those with older mothers. Also there was a trend for children with older mothers to seek more attention. The Mann-Whitney U test indicated that the frequency of explaining own behavior to mother was related to the age of the mother at the .10 level of significance. Children of younger mothers offered explanations of their behavior more frequently during the interaction period.

Education of Mother

Children whose mothers had completed more than a high school education exhibited behavior more frequently in the following categories: seeking attention, seeking information, and statement of fact (Figure 4). Only three of the fourteen mothers had completed more than a high school education. Children whose mothers had obtained a high school education or less appeared to seek affection more often. The Mann-Whitney U test indicated the frequency of giving information and the frequency of showing objects to mother as related to the education level of the mother, showing significance at the .10 level. Children whose mothers had obtained a high school education or less exhibited behavior more often in these two categories.

Education of the Father

The educational level of the child's father was related at the .01 level of significance to the frequency of showing objects to the mother according to the Mann-Whitney U test. Children whose fathers had less than a high school education

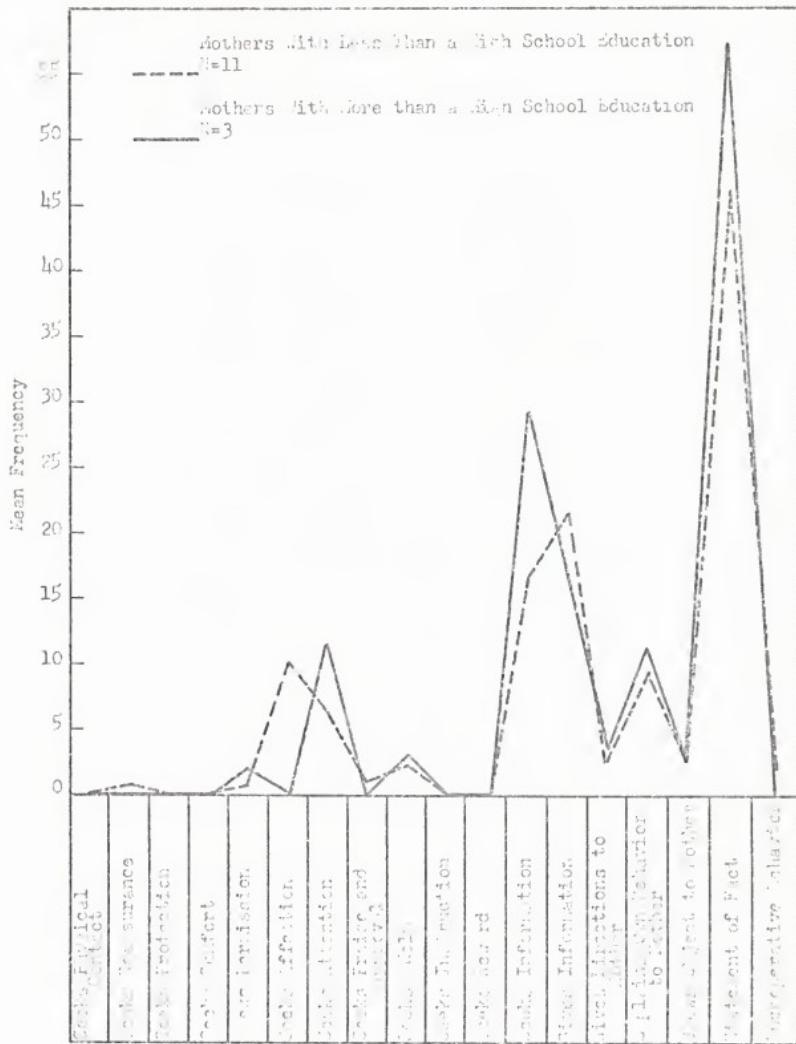


Fig. 4. Mean frequency of behaviors according to education of mother.

exhibited more of this type of behavior. Figure 5 illustrates that children whose fathers had achieved more than a high school education sought affection and information more often than did children whose fathers had achieved a high school education or less.

Occupation of Father

Children whose fathers were engaged in farming sought affection and attention more frequently (Figure 6). Less frequent seeking of information and fewer statements of fact were characteristic of the children whose fathers were engaged in non-farm occupations. The frequency of explaining own behavior was significantly related to the occupation of the father at the .05 level. Children whose fathers were engaged in non-farm occupations explained their own behavior more frequently to their mothers. The frequency of statements of fact and showing objects to mother were significantly related to the occupation of the father at the .10 level. Children whose fathers were engaged in non-farm occupations stated facts more frequently while children whose fathers were engaged in farming showed objects to the mother more frequently.

Responses by Mothers During Interviews

Each mother was interviewed following the observation period in an attempt to get a more complete picture of the child's behavior at home and at other new or unfamiliar places. Nine of the fourteen mothers when asked where their child went

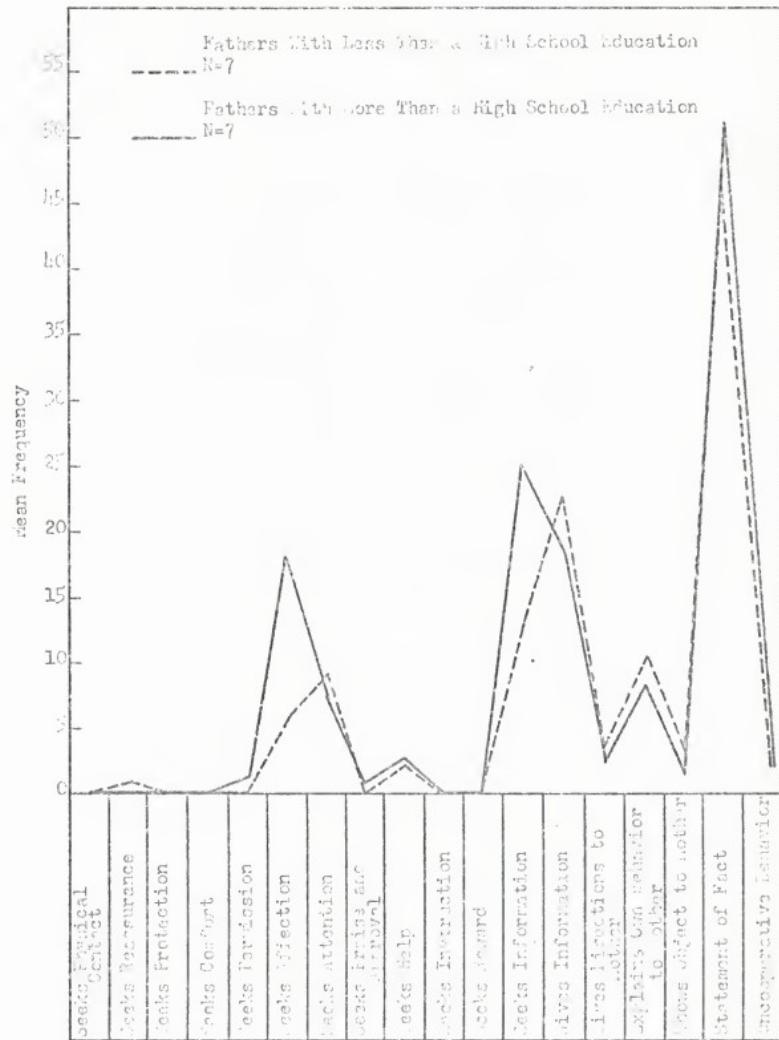


Fig. 5. Mean frequency of behaviors according to education of father.

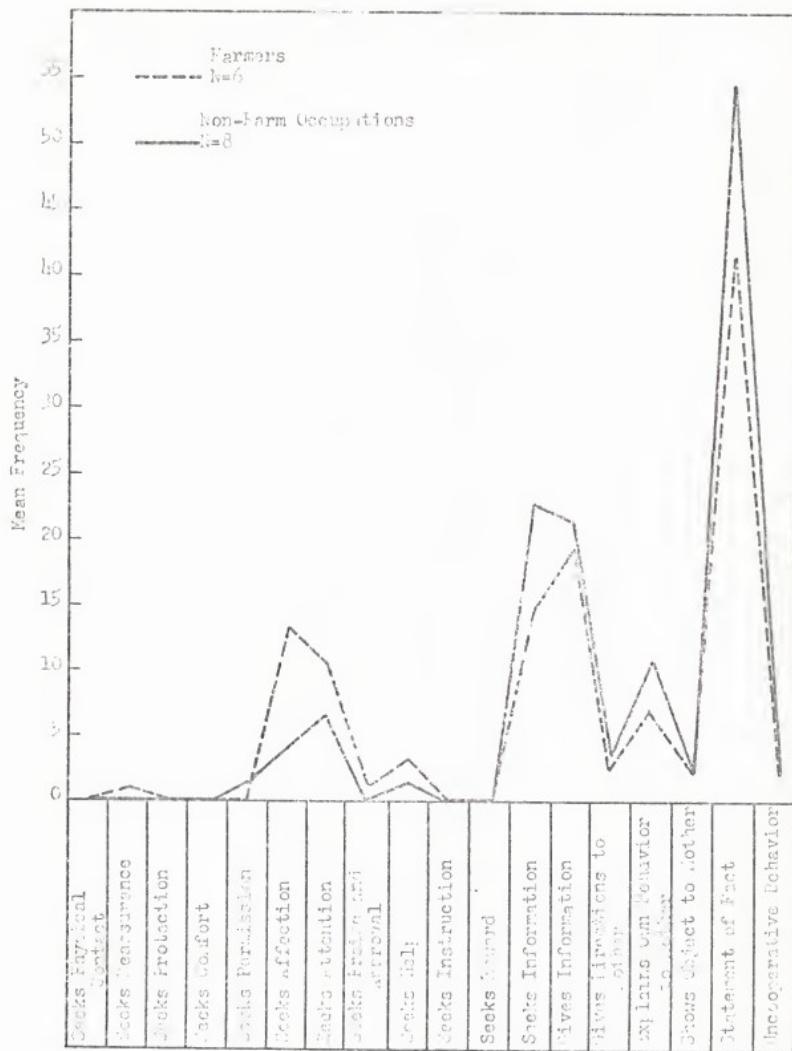


Fig. 6. Mean frequency of behaviors according to occupation of father.

each week replied that their children went to town, to their grandparents, and to Sunday school and church. Two of the mothers made it a weekly practice to take their child to play with neighbor children of about the same age. Only one child went to a babysitter's home during the week. Other responses included going to relatives and accompanying their mother to Scout meetings.

Question two of the interview was concerned with whom the children played. Twelve of the children had older and/or younger siblings to play with. Two of the children played with neighbor children of near their age. Relatives and friends of older siblings were also mentioned.

The third question dealt with whether or not the child attended nursery school or Sunday school. Thirteen of the children attended Sunday school weekly. The fourteenth child was a Catholic and attended church each Sunday but had no organized Sunday school to attend.

The majority of the mothers found it difficult to describe a typical day in their child's life. Children's television programs, such as Captain Kangaroo and the cartoons, were watched daily by six of the children. Five of the mothers said that their children enjoyed spending most of the time playing outdoors even when the weather was cold. Only three of the children took naps regularly. Several of the other children took occasional naps whenever their mothers thought it was necessary. One of the mothers planned an activity with her child every afternoon.

Some of the activities that she did with her child were baking cookies, reading, painting, and taking walks. A majority of the children spent some time during the day playing by themselves. Activities which the child did while he played alone included reading, playing with toys, finger painting, listening to records, coloring and drawing.

The mothers were asked what they needed to remind their children to do or not do during the day. Five mothers had to remind their children to pick up their belongings after they finished using them. Three children had to be reminded not to fight with their siblings and to wash their hands. Other reminders mentioned by the mothers were: not to jump on the furniture, to share toys with siblings, to get dressed in the morning, to make own bed, to set table at mealtime and not to interrupt while others were talking.

When asked how their children reacted when they took them to a new or unfamiliar place, eight of the mothers replied that their children liked to go to new places and six mothers replied that their children were bashful and did not enjoy going to new places. Statements by the mothers included: "likes to go," "loves people," "excited and thrilled," "curious," "very enthusiastic," "bashful," "shy," and "quite timid."

The mothers were asked to answer the question "When you and your child are at home, with whom does he play?" Eleven of the mothers stated that their children played with younger or older siblings. Three of the children played with or engaged in some

kind of activities with their mother. Three of the children spent most of their time playing with their favorite pets. One child interacted with his father whenever possible. Four of the children played alone most of the time.

The mothers were asked if their children played near them or in a special place. Six of the children usually played in the room where their mothers were and seven had a special place to play. One mother said that her child sometimes played in the room she was in and sometimes in another room.

The mothers were asked how often their children interrupted them when they were working. Nine of the mothers responded that their children interrupted them very often. Two said that it varied from day to day.

Table 4 summarizes responses to questions asked during the interview. The interview schedule is located in the Appendix.

Table 4. Responses given during interviews.

Responses	Number of subjects
<u>Places Child Goes Each Week</u>	
Sunday School	11
Grandparents	9
Town	9
Neighbors	2
Scout meetings	2
Relatives	1
Babysitter	1
<u>Persons Child Plays With</u>	
Siblings	12
Neighbor children	10
Relatives	2
Friends of siblings	1

Table 4. (continued).

Responses	Number of subjects
<u>Sunday School Attendance</u>	
Yes	13
No	1
<u>Activities Participated in During a Typical Day</u>	
Watch children's programs on television	6
Plays outdoors	5
Naps	3
Reads	3
Colors	3
Records	2
Plays with mother	1
Paints	1
Draws	1
Goes to babysitter	1
Goes to grandmother's	1
<u>Reminders of Things Child Should Do or Not Do</u>	
Pick up belongings	5
Not to fight with siblings	3
To wash hands	3
Dress in morning	2
Not to jump on furniture	1
Share toys	1
Eat better	1
Be careful in physical activities	1
Make bed	1
Set table	1
Not to play in the dirt	1
Not to interrupt when others are talking	1
Not to spend too much time at grandparent's home	1
<u>Reactions of Child in New or Unfamiliar Places</u>	
Liked to go	8
Did not like to go	6
<u>Persons Child Plays With at Home</u>	
Siblings	11
Alone	4
Mother	3
Pets	3
Father	1

Table 4. (continued).

Responses	Number of subjects
<u>Place Child Plays at Home</u>	
Different room than mother	7
Same room as mother	6
Both	1
<u>Amount of Interruptions Made by the Child During the Day</u>	
Seldom	9
Very often	3
Varies	2

Although the sample of this pilot study was not large the findings do suggest factors which should be considered in understanding the socialization of the rural child. There were tendencies for the child's behavior to be affected by factors such as age of child, sex of child, educational levels of the father and mother and occupation of the father.

A summary of the statistical analysis is presented in Table 5. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine the significance of seven of the behavior categories. The majority of the children did not show behavior in the remaining categories.

Table 5. Correlation of frequency of behaviors with age of child, sex, age of mother, education of mother, education of father, and occupation of father.

Behavior Categories	Level of significance achieved					
	Age of child	Sex	Age of mother	Educ. of mother	Educ. of father	Occup. father
Seeking Attention	NS*	.10	NS	NS	NS	NS
Giving Directions to Mother	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Seeking Information	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Giving Information	NS	NS	NS	.10	NS	NS
Explaining Own Behavior to Mother	NS	.10	.10	NS	NS	.05
Statement of Fact	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Showing Objects to Mother	NS	NS	NS	.10	.01	.10

*Not significant

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

The young child can be pictured as an explorer investigating, cataloguing, and attempting to make some sense of the characteristics of his physical environment. All the while he has also been interacting with a social environment. As the child seeks understanding of his world, how frequently does he seek help or support from his mother, and how frequently does he seek to share with her some of his own observations and learnings?

The answer to this question depends on the particular child's particular social environment. Children have grown up and continue to grow up in a great variety of social environments. The main purpose of this investigation was to study the interactional behavior of the preschool child and his mother, with emphasis on the child's behavior as a means of gaining insight into the socialization process of rural families.

The factors of socialization, as seen in this study, could be divided into three main parts: characteristics of the individual child, such as age, sex, and behavior characteristics; characteristics of the parents, such as education and occupation; and contacts with the peer-group.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INDIVIDUAL CHILD

Age

The age difference between the oldest and youngest subjects in this study was thirteen months. No significant differences in the behavior of the older and younger subjects were observed. However, there was a tendency for the younger children to seek attention more frequently from their mothers than did the older children. Heathers (1954) reported that novel or strange situations were threatening to the children. Gaining attention from his mother is the child's primary source of security in coping with problem situations and the child can predict her reactions to him with considerable success. Interaction with the mother may relieve anxiety when a child is apprehensive in a new environment.

The older children gave information more frequently to their mothers while the younger children sought information more frequently from their mothers. The subjects used for this investigation will be attending kindergarten within a year. Hurlock (1964) stressed that a child's eagerness to learn, a characteristic of children beginning school, gives him a strong motivation to learn new words and to exhibit much verbal behavior. The categories which were prime examples of verbal behavior included statement of fact, giving information, and seeking information. Seventy-eight percent of the total recorded behavior fell within these three categories. The child in

the preschool years is interested in understanding the many aspects of his environment and sharing his knowledge with the significant others in his life.

Sex

The sex of the child is important in understanding the socialization process. There is evidence that this factor determines the amount and kind of socializing action a child receives from his like-sex parent (Watson, 1965). In a study of notions about sex appropriateness of parental care and companionship activities, girls chose mother for both care and companionship significantly more than boys (Landreth, 1963). The investigator noted that only one child, a girl, interacted with her father to any extent during a typical day. Her mother was quoted as saying, "When her daddy is at home, she is her daddy's girl." None of the other fathers took major responsibility in caring for their children, such as bathing them or putting them to bed.

The responses to the question concerning what the mother had to remind her child to do or not to do shed some light on how parents react with boys and girls. Most of the girls were reminded to be neat and orderly while the boys were reminded to keep clean and not to fight with siblings. Sears' (1957) found that girls were under greater pressure than boys to have good table manners and to be neat and orderly. This conclusion seems to support the hypothesis that parental

expectation and therefore parent-child interaction is different for male and female children.

Behavior Characteristics

The subjects in this study exhibited more independent behavior than dependent behavior. An indication of the independent behavior of these children was brought out in the answers to the question of how often the child interrupted his mother. Nine of the mothers stated that their children seldom interrupted them. Over half of the children were able to play independently without interacting with their mothers.

The mother's attitudes toward dependence is important in connection with age changes (Watson, 1965). Mothers expect infants to be completely dependent, but also expect that they will become gradually less dependent as they grow older. The mother, as a principal agent of socialization during infancy, fosters dependence in some degree and manner, but at least in later infancy also introduces training with the aim of decreasing dependence. The age of three through five seems to be the period that is critical for the development of optimal balance between independent and dependent behavior.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARENTS

Education

It is expected that parents who exhibit intelligent qualities will rear children who are intelligent and well adjusted (Hurlock, 1964). The children of mothers and fathers

who had achieved more than a high school education tended to seek more information from their mothers during the observation period. Children whose fathers had completed a high school education or less showed objects to their mother more frequently than children whose fathers had completed more than a high school education. This difference was significant at the .01 level. This may indicate that children of homes in which lower levels of education were achieved will exhibit physical rather than verbal behaviors.

Hess and Shipman (1965) found that mothers with more education tended to control their children's behavior by drawing their attention to the individual characteristics of a specific situation and by relating one event to another. They were able to anticipate their child's errors and warn him in advance. They encouraged him to reflect and weigh decisions. It was noted by the investigator that during the observation periods the mothers with higher education would attempt to structure a learning experience for their children. For example, they would explain and demonstrate how to paint on an easel or how to keep the paint brush from dripping.

Only one mother indicated she made a special effort to make the home a learning environment. This mother had almost completed a college degree and realized the importance of doing something with her child every day. This mother said during the interview that "Every afternoon I will do something with her like read, make cookies, or something like that...sort of keep her occupied

until her brother gets up from his nap." It appeared that the other mothers could have included this mother-child interaction during the day as only one mother was employed outside the home. Zunich, Walter, and Conner (1964) found that the ratio of time units spent playing interactively with children between mothers of the lower class and mothers of the middle-and-upper class was nearly 250 to 1. The lower class mothers spent very little time playing interactively with their children. Further research needs to be done to determine whether the quantity and quality of mother-child interaction differs in urban and rural families.

Occupation

This investigation did not attempt to make any distinction between the social classes of the families. However, a crude division was made between middle-class professional parents and working-class parents. Research shows that middle class parents in professions report socializing practices consistent with current psychological notions of what is effective and desirable (Bronfenbrenner, 1958; Sewell, 1961). They report concern with their children's development and with understanding their behavior. They use love-oriented discipline. They reason with their children and give explanations for their injunctions. They encourage independence and achievement. Six of the mothers in the professional group stated that they wanted their children to attend college when asked what kind of goals they had for their children. Four of the mothers mentioned college as a goal only if their children were capable and interested in

attending. Working-class parents, in contrast, are reported to use less desirable disciplinary practices such as more physical punishment, more rigid and authoritarian discipline, more punishment of behavior in terms of its immediate outcome rather than of the child's intention, more insistence on obedience and less inclination to let children "air their views." The mothers of the working-class in this sample expressed much greater concern for the happiness of their children than did the middle-class professional parents.

PEER GROUP CONTACTS

Opportunities for contacts with other children of the same age appear to be less frequent for rural children than for urban children. Only two of the mothers in the sample made it a weekly practice to take their children to play with neighbor children of about the same age. Sunday School provided an opportunity for these rural children to interact with other children. Thirteen of the fourteen children took part in Sunday School. This indicates the importance of examining the activities that Sunday School provides and capitalizing on the opportunity to aid in the development of the rural child.

Further study in the area of rural socialization practices is needed. This pilot study using only fourteen subjects has been only a beginning in the area. As mentioned, practically all studies done in this area used subjects who came from urban areas. Studies were concerned with the mother's behavior

rather than the child's behavior. The interactional process is two-way indicating that the child's behavior is as important an influence on this socialization process as the mother's.

Study of the interactional behavior of rural children and their mothers is vital in furthering understanding of the socialization process.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY

Socialization is the process of helping children to become functioning adult members of their society. Through this process an individual becomes a member of a society by achieving ways of experiencing and behaving which conform with that society's values. The child learns the norms of his society---the common forms of behavior expected of him. Within the limits of what is considered customary and acceptable, some activities are viewed neutrally, while still others are actively discouraged.

The objective of this study was to gain information to further understanding of the socialization process of rural children. This objective was achieved by studying the interactional behavior of preschool children and their mothers when the children were placed in an unfamiliar environment. Observation was focused on the child's behavior.

Fourteen mother and child pairs were observed for a half-hour period in a specially arranged room. This room was equipped with items usually found in a nursery school. The behavior of each child was recorded in eighteen behavior categories. After the thirty-minute observation period, each mother was interviewed by the investigator.

Behavior was observed for the sample in thirteen of the eighteen predetermined categories. The categories representing dependency behavior were grouped together. The number of behaviors recorded in the dependency category constituted 10.2 per cent of the total behaviors recorded, with seeking attention the most frequently observed behavior.

Comparisons were made between subgroups in the sample. The following differences were found to be significant at the .10 level utilizing the Mann-Whitney U test.

1. Girls exhibited behavior in the categories of explaining own behavior to mother and seeking attention more frequently than did boys.
2. Children of younger mothers offered explanations of their own behavior more frequently than did the children of the older mothers.
3. Children whose mothers had obtained a high school education or less exhibited behavior in the categories of giving information and showing objects to mother more frequently than did the children whose mothers had completed more than a high school education.
4. Children whose fathers had completed a high school education or less exhibited behavior in the category of showing objects to the mother more often than did the children whose fathers had completed more than a high school education.

5. Children whose fathers were engaged in non-farm occupations explained their own behavior to their mothers more often, and showed objects less frequently to their mothers.

Tendencies for certain behaviors to occur were observed in this investigation. These were:

1. Younger children sought attention and information from their mothers more frequently and gave information to their mothers less frequently than did older children.
2. Girls showed a trend toward seeking attention, affection, and information more frequently and toward giving information to their mothers less frequently than did boys.
3. Children whose mothers had completed more than a high school education exhibited behavior in the following categories more often; Seeking attention, seeking information, and statement of fact. They exhibited behavior less frequently in the category of seeking affection than did the children whose mothers had completed more than a high school education.
4. Children whose fathers had achieved more than a high school education sought affection and information more frequently than did the children whose fathers had achieved a high school education or less.
5. Seeking information less often, making fewer statements of fact, and seeking affection less often were characteristic of children whose fathers were engaged in non-farm occupations.

The investigator saw the following limitations present in the study. The method of recording the child's behavior during the observation period did not indicate the amount of time spent on each of the behavior categories; it only indicated the number of times a behavior occurred. Secondly, the interview schedule used by the investigator to obtain an understanding of the child's behavior at home and in other new or unfamiliar places may have omitted some of the important facets of the child's life. It was not possible to cover the universe of mother-child interaction and questions were selected which seemed most related to the topic of this study. Thirdly, the responses given by the mothers during the interviews may have been incomplete or not completely objective. The fourth limitation seen was that more accurate and complete conclusions could have been drawn if the sample had been larger. The child was observed in only one situation. It would be dangerous to generalize that this behavior could be seen in all situations.

The findings of this investigation suggest factors to consider in understanding the socialization of the rural child. These factors include age of child, sex of child, educational level of the father and the mother and occupation of the father. This investigation provides only a miniature picture of the socialization process and further research should be conducted in this area.

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APPENDIX



KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY Manhattan, Kansas 66502

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT, JUSTIN HALL

64

March , 1968

Dear _____:

As a nursery school teacher, I am interested in observing how young children work and play. For my Master's Degree, I am planning some observations of children in a nursery setting in our observation room in Justin Hall, the Home Economics building on campus.

I would like to talk to you about the possibility of having you and your child be a part of this study. Your name was given to me by Mr. Vincent Alstatt, Superintendent of Schools in Riley.

I will be in your area one afternoon during the week of March and will stop by your home to talk to you.

Sincerely,

Janice Bailey
Graduate Student

Marjorie Stith, Ph.D.
Head, Department of Family
and Child Development

Ivalee H. McCord, Ph.D.
Major Advisor

Parents Name _____ Phone Number _____

Child's Name _____

Age of Mother _____

Age of Child _____ years _____ months

Sex of Child _____

Number of Brothers Older _____ Sisters Older _____
Younger _____ Younger _____

Occupation of Father _____

Occupation of Mother _____

Education Level of Father _____

Education Level of Mother _____

What kind of mother do you think you are?

What goals do you have for your child?

Need transportation _____ yes _____ no

Time when you can come.



INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Where are some of the places that your child goes each week?

2. Who does your child play with?
Boys-----Girls
Older-----Younger

3. Is your child in a nursery school or Sunday School?

4. Describe a typical day of your child's life from morning to night.

5. During this typical day what are some of the things you have to remind your child to do or not to do?

6. How does your child react when you take him to a new or unfamiliar place?

7. When you and your child are at home, with whom does he play?

8. Does he have a special place to play or does he play in the room where you are?

9. How often does he interrupt you when you are working?

INTERACTIONAL BEHAVIOR OF PRESCHOOL
CHILDREN WITH MOTHERS' PRESENT

by

LORETTA ELIZABETH REEH

B. S., Kansas State University, 1967

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Family and Child Development

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1969

Socialization is the process of helping children to become functioning adult members of their society. Through this process an individual becomes a member of a society by achieving ways of experiencing and behaving which conform with that society's values. The child learns the norms of his society---the common forms of behavior expected of him. Within the limits of what is considered customary and acceptable; other activities are viewed neutrally, while still others are actively discouraged.

The objective of this study was to gain information to further understanding of the socialization of rural children. This objective was achieved by studying the interactional behavior of preschool children and their mothers when the children were placed in an unfamiliar environment. The focus of this study was on the child's behavior.

Fourteen mother and child pairs were observed for half-hour periods in a specially arranged room. This room was equipped with items usually found in a nursery school. The behavior of each child was recorded in eighteen behavior categories. After the thirty minute observation period, each mother was interviewed by the investigator.

This investigation was exploratory in nature. Tendencies for certain behaviors to occur were observed in the study. The following differences were found to be significant at the .10 level according to the Mann-Whitney U test: (1) Girls exhibited behavior in the categories of explaining own behavior to mother

and seeking attention more frequently than did the boys; (2) children of younger mothers offered explanations of their own behavior during the interaction period more frequently than did the children of the older mothers; (3) children whose mothers had obtained a high school education or less exhibited behavior in the categories of giving information and showing objects to mother more often than did the children whose mothers completed more than a high school education; (4) children whose fathers had completed a high school education or less exhibited behavior in the category of showing objects to the mother more frequently than did the children whose fathers had completed more than a high school education; and (5) children whose fathers were engaged in non-farm occupations explained their own behavior more often to their mothers, more frequently stated facts and showed objects less frequently to their mother.

This investigation suggests factors which should be considered in understanding the socialization of the rural child. These factors include age of child, sex of child, educational levels of the father and mother and occupation of the father. This investigation provides only a miniature picture of the socialization process for rural children and suggests the value of further study in this area.